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SHERBORNE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1941.

This Report is prepared on the lines asked for by the Minister of Health in Circular 2314. In accordance with his directions, most information usually contained in the Report is omitted and filed for future reference. Statistics, while being collated and recorded, are only quoted in this Report where they are of particular significance.

Noël F. Pearson M.R.C.S.,L.R.C.P.,D.P.H. became Medical Officer of Health on 1st January in succession to Dr. G. R. Rickett.

Infectious Disease

The Isolation Hospital of the North Dorset Joint Hospital Board (of which your Authority is a constituent member), was destroyed by fire during the early part of the year, and was replaced by a temporary Isolation Hospital of 26 beds established at Vine House, Sturminster Newton.

No particular remarks are called for in connection with the incidence of major infectious disease during the year. Three cases of Diphtheria, one of Scarlet Fever, and two cases of Cerebro spinal Meningitis were notified.

Diphtheria Immunisation

The end of the first nine months of the Council's Scheme providing immunisation against Diphtheria, free of cost, to all children between the ages of one and fifteen years, showed that 54% of children of school age had received treatment, and 30% of the children under School age. The Scheme cannot be expected to influence the general incidence of the disease until 70% of all children have received treatment.

Scabies

This has been the major public health problem during the year. The disease is not a statutory notifiable disease and therefore no accurate figures are available to demonstrate the increase in the prevalence of the condition in your area during the year - as the condition was equally prevalent throughout the North Dorset District, the figures of admission to the Sick Bay from the whole North Dorset District give a clear indication of the increased incidence of the disease.

In 1939 (during the last three months of the year) 8 cases (equivalent to 32 in a full year), were admitted to the Sick Bay.

In 1940 the comparable figure was 45.

In 1941 the comparable figure was 214.

In order to facilitate ascertainment and early treatment you sought powers to make this disease compulsorily notifiable, in March, 1941. You were not able to obtain these powers. Throughout

the year your policy with regard to Scabies has been to provide in-patient Sick Bay treatment for all cases where this was requested by a Medical Practitioner, and to carry out disinfestation of clothes and bedclothes. The weakness in your Scheme for dealing with this condition has been the absence of means by which all cases, and home contacts, coming to the notice of your Medical Officer of Health could be fully investigated, and treatment offered to those found by investigation to be sufferers, together with follow up of cases after treatment so that cases showing a recurrence of the condition could be dealt with immediately before further persons had become infected by them. To close this gap in your Scheme, and to enable you to put into effect the Scabies Order 1941, your Medical Officer of Health advised you in December 1941, to appoint, in conjunction with the other Districts in North Dorset, a Public Health Nurse with clerical assistance. Unless full and complete measures are adopted to deal with Scabies as now established, I can see no reason to anticipate but that its increased incidence will remain established in the district.

Sanitary Work

The most disturbing matter to which I have again to draw your attention is the degree to which the routine work of the Sanitary Inspector (in his capacity as Sanitary Inspector) is being interfered with by calls on the services of the Inspector by other matters more directly concerned with the war situation (Billeting, Evacuation, Civil Defence Etc.). When it is noted that in 1941 only 252 Sanitary Inspections (for all purposes) were carried out, as against 1157 during the year 1938, the present position can be better appreciated.

I must again advise you that it is neither desirable nor safe for the services of a qualified Sanitary Inspector to be monopolised with duties detrimental to his carrying out his normal sanitary supervision and control in the district - particularly in relation to milk production.

Evacuation

Early in the year reciprocal arrangements were made with other Districts in the North Dorset Area, for the use of the various hostels and Sick Bay established in connection with the Government Evacuation Scheme, resulting in "The Beeches" at Sherborne being retained principally for 'bed wetters' and other unbilletable cases, 'sick bay' cases being sent to the Sick Bay administered by the Sturminster Rural District Council. During the year 25 cases were admitted to the Sick Bay from your district.

Ready reciprocal use, by all the Authorities in North Dorset, of the various Evacuation Hostels and Nurseries within the several districts, has been achieved by the ready goodwill and mutual assistance of each of the Chief Billeting Officers.

Water Supplies

Some extensions to the Council's Services have been carried out during the year to meet Military requirements and others are under consideration. All the Council's supplies are now being regularly chlorinated in accordance with the directions made under the Defence Regulations.

In termination I would record, with gratitude, the courtesy and support given to me by your Council during my first year of office, the assistance given to me by your other officers and the efficient service rendered by my clerk.

NOEL F. PEARSON,

1st May, 1942 Medical Officer of Health.